

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the indication that the drawings are acceptable, and for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Claim for Priority and receipt of the certified copies of the priority documents.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 9 and 50 contain allowable subject matter, on page 4 of the Official Action.

Upon entry of the above amendments, claims 1-5, 8-48 and 50-70 will have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof, and claims 6 and 49 will have been amended. Claims 6, 7 and 49 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the outstanding rejections and allowance of all of the claims in the present application. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

Applicants note that the present amendments merely cancel non-elected claims, which have been withdrawn from consideration by the Examiner, and amend independent claims to insert subject matter of dependent claims which the Examiner has previously indicated as being allowable. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request entry of the present amendments, reconsideration of the outstanding objections and rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

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On page 3 of the Official Action, claims 6, 7 and 49 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by MAEDA (U.S. Patent No. 6,199,394).

Applicants note that claim 6 (from which claim 7 depends) has been amended to include the subject matter of previous claim 9 (which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable). Applicants further note that claim 49 has been amended to include the subject matter of previous claim 50 (which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), and an early indication of the allowance of all of the claims.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

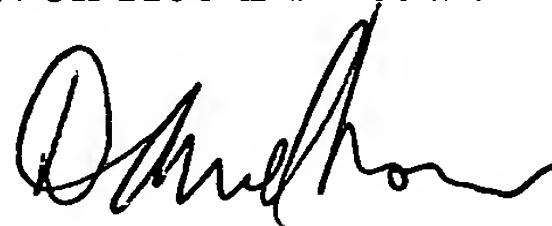
Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendments to the claims that have been made in this amendment, which do not narrow the scope of the claims, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered cosmetic in nature, and to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions or comments, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
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